

The second motive proved to be the stronger one. The skeptical attitude was directed against science itself, not, perhaps, in its obvious results but in the value of scientific reasoning as such.

Rousseau is a famous example of the mutual interference of these two tendencies of enlightenment. Since his time "irrationalism" has steadily grown; today there is even a worshipping of anti-rational forces. As long as the struggle to free individuals from all bonds and boundaries continued, the struggle itself furnished some center of orientation; but thereafter man plunged into the void, the nothingness. Thereby he became ripe for totalitarianism, that strange mixture of rationalism and romanticism.

For a long time the teaching has prevailed that self-preservation is the true and only real goal of all human activity. But the present time proves again that man does not live by bread alone. Nobody will deny the power of economic needs, but besides these there is a metaphysical dread of the infinite, of the void, of the nothingness. Wealth may provide many means of intoxication and dissipation for the quieting of this dread; misery brings it to its climax, and reveals the true situation of man, confronting him with the infinite.

The totalitarian states have understood these needs of man. They have established an obligatory hierarchy of values in which the economic ones are not the highest or the decisive ones. They understand the role that imagination plays in man's psychical life. That they base the new order on the very questionable opinions of individuals, calling absolute these relative and limited views, must necessarily lead to a conflict with reality; this error transforms their constitution into a cruel and merciless tyranny.

But we must not forget that the dictators rose to power because men were longing for new masters, for new gods. They asked for commandments even if they rejected those given on Mount Sinai. The totalitarian states arose from the crisis. They pretend to offer solutions for the crisis. Because we abhor a social order of slaves and their masters, we have to ask ourselves if this solution is the only possible one. Therefore our task in education is clear.

If all pain and labor, if all the immense expenditure of human thought and energy, is directed only toward self-preservation, then the right and only important thing for young people to do is to grasp as quickly as possible that knowledge and that skill which are necessary for jobs and for making money. But if this is not true, education must do far more.

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First, the eternal questions—to use a solemn word—must become vital questions again; the central problems must become visible again, not as special problems for specialists, but as problems concerning all of us and ultimately giving to all our knowledge and skill their real meaning and importance.